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PTQ3064

RELEASED IN PART  
B1, 1.4(C)

PAGE 01 CARACA 03938 01 OF 02 101812Z  
ACTION WHA-00

INFO	LOG-00	A-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00
	VC-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	L-00	CAC-00
	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OCS-03	OMB-01	DHS-00
	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00	SSO-00
	SS-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	ASDS-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00
	DRL-02	G-00	SAS-00	/008W			

-----1590A0 101812Z /75

O 101619Z DEC 02  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8909  
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
AMEMBASSY LIMA  
AMEMBASSY MEXICO  
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO  
USINT HAVANA  
NSC WASHDC  
USCINCSO MIAMI FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 003938

NSC FOR LLORENS  
USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/10/2012  
TAGS: AMGT, PREL, PGOV, ASEC, CASC, OAS, VE  
SUBJECT: POLITICAL UPDATE, DECEMBER 10, 2002 - 11:00 LOCAL  
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CLASSIFIED BY: DCM FREDERICK B. COOK. REASON 1.5(B) AND (D).

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SUMMARY  
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1. (C) NATIONWIDE PRO-CHAVEZ DEMONSTRATIONS AT TELEVISION  
STATIONS LATE DECEMBER 9 DIMMED PROGRESS AT OAS NEGOTIATING  
TABLE, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] NATIONWIDE  
DECEMBER 9 PRO-CHAVEZ DEMONSTRATIONS AT KEY MEDIA CENTERS  
INCLUDED THE PARTICIPATION OF KEY MVR OFFICIALS.  
POLICE/MILITARY PROTECTION WAS POOR TO NON-EXISTENT, AND

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(D)  
DECLASSIFY AFTER: 6 JUN 2027  
DATE/CASE ID: 08 MAR 2007 200503244

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DEMONSTRATORS ENTERED AND VANDALIZED SEVERAL MEDIA SITES. THE NATIONAL STRIKE REACHED SENIAT, THE GOV'S TAX AUTHORITY, ON DECEMBER 9, WHEN A GROUP OF 20 EMPLOYEES JOINED THE PROTEST WHILE SOME 50 OF THEIR COLLEAGUES WERE PREVENTED FROM DOING SO. [REDACTED] BELIEVE THE STRIKE COULD NOT CONTINUE MUCH LONGER WITHOUT THE MILITARY STEPPING IN TO BREAK THE POLITICAL IMPASSE. AS THE STRIKE WEARS ON, SUPPORT FOR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY VICE PRESIDENT RAFAEL SIMON JIMENEZ'S CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT PROPOSAL IS FADING. END SUMMARY.

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2. (SBU) THE AMBASSADOR IS MEETING SEPARATELY THIS MORNING WITH VICE PRESIDENT RANGEL (AT RANGEL'S REQUEST) AND FOREIGN MINISTER CHADERTON. WE WILL REPORT ON THOSE MEETINGS LATER TODAY.

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STEPS FORWARD AT THE GAVIRIA TALKS?  
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3. (U) DURING THE DECEMBER 9 SESSION, THE GOV NEGOTIATING TEAM AGREED TO PROPOSE AND DISCUSS AN ELECTORAL TIMETABLE IN FOLLOW-ON SESSIONS BETWEEN THE GOV AND DEMOCRATIC COORDINATING COMMITTEE (DCC) THIS WEEK. THE GOV EMPHASIZED THE NEED TO WORK WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE ELECTORAL LAW RECENTLY PASSED BY THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. THE DCC TEAM, HOWEVER, SAID IT WOULD ONLY CONSIDER A TIMETABLE THAT ANTICIPATED ELECTIONS IN THE FIRST TRIMESTER OF 2003. OAS SECRETARY GENERAL CESAR GAVIRIA TOLD REPORTERS THE DECEMBER 9 SESSION WAS NOT EASY DUE TO THE TENSE CLIMATE IN THE COUNTRY.

4. [REDACTED]

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(NOTE: GAVIRIA MADE A STATEMENT LATE DECEMBER 9 DENOUNCING THE ATTACKS ON THE MEDIA, AND GOV NEGOTIATOR NICOLAS MADURO WAS SPOTTED AMONG PRO-CHAVEZ PROTESTERS AT GLOBOVISION.) [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] TOLD POLOFF THAT THEY MADE "MINUSCULE ADVANCES" DECEMBER 9, BUT THAT THE GOV STILL HAD NOT PROPOSED ANYTHING NEW. [REDACTED] THE DCC IS NOW LOOKING FOR PRESIDENT CHAVEZ TO RESIGN IN ORDER TO CONVOKE ELECTIONS IN 2003. ADMITTING THAT THIS WAS A CHANGE IN TACK [REDACTED] SAID OPPOSITION HAS TO REACT TO THE "FASCIST" ACTS OF THE GOV. THE OPPOSITION CONTINUES TO SEEK THE RIGHT TO SPEAK

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BEFORE THE OAS PERMANENT COUNCIL.

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MORE ON DECEMBER 9 PRO-CHAVEZ PROTESTS AT MEDIA OUTLETS  
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5. (SBU) PRO-GOVERNMENT CROWDS, CLEARLY ORGANIZED, DEMONSTRATED AT ALL TELEVISION (AND SOME RADIO) STATIONS NATIONWIDE LATE DECEMBER 9. MVR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEPUTIES IRIS VARELA, LUIS TASCON, NICOLAS MADURO, CALIXTO ORTEGA AND CILIA FLORES WERE AMONG THE FIFTH REPUBLIC MOVEMENT (MVR) NOTABLES PRESENT AT DIFFERENT SITES. MEDIA CONTACTS REPORTED THAT THEY HAD RECEIVED INDICATIONS OF IMPENDING ATTACKS THROUGHOUT THE DAY, SO THEY WERE NOT SURPRISED WHEN DEMONSTRATORS ARRIVED. PROTESTERS BROKE INTO AT LEAST SIX BROADCASTING STATIONS. IN MARACAIBO, DEMONSTRATORS GUTTED TELECOLOR TV STUDIOS AND DESTROYED MONITORS, CAMERAS AND FURNITURE. IN MARACAY, PROTESTERS ATTACKED TVS AT 1957 HOURS, KNOCKING THE STATION'S SIGNAL OFF THE AIR FOR SEVERAL HOURS AND DESTROYED SOME OF THE STATION'S BROADCASTING EQUIPMENT.

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INFO	LOG-00	A-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00
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6. (SBU) BETWEEN 2300 AND 0100 DECEMBER 9-10, PRO-CHAVEZ CROWDS ALSO PROTESTED AT CARACAS NEWSPAPER BUILDINGS "EL UNIVERSAL", "EL NACIONAL", "AS ES LA NOTICIA", AND "2001". THEY DID NOT ENTER ANY OF THESE BUILDINGS. IN MOST CASES IN THE REGIONAL CITIES, LOCAL POLICE DID NOT ARRIVE UNTIL THE CROWDS HAD DISPERSED. IN CARACAS, THERE WAS SOME PRESENCE OF SMALL CONTINGENTS OF NATIONAL GUARDSMEN AT SOME SITES. DISIP (SECRET POLICE) HAD WITHDRAWN PROTECTIVE UNITS FROM ALL MAJOR BROADCASTERS ON THE MORNING OF DECEMBER 9.

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STRIKE REACHES GOV TAX AUTHORITY  
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7. (C) ON DECEMBER 9, A GROUP OF EMPLOYEES AT SENIAT, VENEZUELA'S TAXATION AUTHORITY, JOINED THE NATIONAL CIVIC STRIKE. AUTHORITIES AT SENIAT HAVE THREATENED TO FIRE EMPLOYEES THAT DO NOT GO TO WORK. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] TOLD POLOFF DECEMBER 10 THAT SEVERAL SENIAT EMPLOYEES HAD CONTACTED [REDACTED] FROM THEIR OFFICE BUILDINGS WHERE THEY WERE PROHIBITED FROM JOINING THE WALK-OUT. [REDACTED] APPROXIMATELY 20 EMPLOYEES IN SENIAT'S DOWNTOWN CARACAS OFFICES WERE ABLE TO EXIT THE BUILDING TO PROTEST, WHILE AS MANY AS 50 OTHERS WERE LOCKED INSIDE. [REDACTED]

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TO ASK THAT THE EMPLOYEES' CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO PROTEST BE RESPECTED. AS THEY LEFT SENIAT, EMPLOYEES WHO WERE HELD IN THEIR OFFICES THREW PAPERS OUT THEIR OFFICE WINDOWS [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] THAT ROUGHLY 50 PERCENT OF  
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SENIAT'S CARACAS EMPLOYEES STAYED HOME FROM WORK DECEMBER 10. THEY REPORT 100 PERCENT PARTICIPATION IN SENIAT'S MERIDA OFFICE.

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SEES MILITARY INTERVENTION

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8.

BELIEVE

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THE ONLY EXIT FROM THE NATIONAL STRIKE IS IF THE MILITARY HIGH COMMAND TELLS PRESIDENT CHAVEZ HE HAS LOST THEIR SUPPORT. THEY THOUGHT A DELEGATION LED BY ARMY COMMANDER GEN. JULIO GARCIA MONTOYA AND FOURTH DIVISION COMMANDER GEN. RAUL BADUEL WOULD BE REQUIRED TO PRESSURE CHAVEZ TO CONCEDE TO ELECTIONS.

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TOLD POLOFF DECEMBER 9 THAT THE POLITICAL CRISIS HAS PLACED THE NATIONAL GUARD IN TURMOIL, BUT

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ADDED THEY DID NOT THINK THE STRIKE COULD GO MUCH LONGER WITHOUT THE MILITARY ACTING TO BREAK THE POLITICAL IMPASSE.

SUPPORT FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT IN ASSEMBLY FADING

9.

SAYS

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THAT SUPPORT FOR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY VICE PRESIDENT RAFAEL SIMON JIMENEZ'S CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT PROPOSAL IS ALREADY FADING. TOLD

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POLOFF DECEMBER 10 THAT JIMENEZ HAS YET TO MAKE A CONCRETE PROPOSAL AND HAS CONTRADICTED HIMSELF PUBLICLY REGARDING THE NEED TO OBTAIN EITHER A SIMPLE MAJORITY OR A BROAD CONSENSUS FOR THE PLAN. BELIEVES ONE OF THE FOUR

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PRO-CHAVEZ LEGISLATORS WHO FIRST BACKED JIMENEZ'S IDEA,

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HAS NOW WITHDRAWN HIS SUPPORT.

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THE 79 OPPOSITION LEGISLATORS, ARE NOW DISTANCING THEMSELVES FROM JIMENEZ, AND SUSPECT HIS GAMBIT WAS INTENDED TO BUY CHAVEZ TIME.

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